Limited company

Corbey, R.H.A.; Mason, P.

Published in:
Anthrozoös: A Multidisciplinary Journal on The Interaction of People and Animals and Nature

Publication date:
1994

COMMENTARY

LIMITED COMPANY

Raymond Corbey* and
Peter Mason**

INTRODUCTION

One of the most influential writings by the British anthropologist Edmund Leach is his 'Anthropological Aspects of Language: Animal Categories and Verbal Abuse,' first published in 1964 and subsequently reprinted elsewhere.[1] In this article, Leach stressed what he called the 'marginal,' 'ambiguous,' or 'anomalous' nature of certain animals which occur in discussions of both taboos and verbal abuse.

Anthropological discussions of animal classification since then have tended to remain loyal to the same theoretical framework, examining the various ways in which humans actually classify what they define as the animal kingdom.[2]

The aim of the present article is different. It does not start from an (implicit or explicit) definition of the animal realm as the object of study. Instead, the presence of animal categories in abuse is presented within an ethno-anthropological[3] context: the relegation of others to the borders of humanity is brought into relation with the establishing of a distance between self and other (in anthropological terms) and between Self and Other (in philosophical terms). In drawing on examples taken from a period spanning the civilizations of ancient Mesopotamia to the nineteenth century, there is an obvious risk of playing down the importance of the varying historical contexts of each item. The authors hope that the potential disadvantages of this procedure will be outweighed by the demonstration of remarkable continuities over time in the production and exclusion of the other.

Finally, the terms of the discussion themselves are shown to be implicated in the object of investigation. The exclusion of animals *from* the human realm appears as a prior condition of the possibility of discourse *about* the relegation of animals to the animal world. In the human sciences, 'we' refers to a limited company.

PRODUCTION BY EXCLUSION

The Jesuit Alessandro Valignano was sent to visit the Asian missions of his order in 1574. He held a negative view of the peoples of India and Africa as being little better than 'brute beasts,' born to serve rather than to command. He discounted the so-called white races of China and Japan from this assertion, however. During this period, it was Japan which was the exciting field for missionary activity, so that the greater the euphoria for Japan, the greater the scorn for India. A few years later Valignano's picture of Japan began to change. He now saw the Japanese as the most dissembling and insincere people, combining cruelty, dignity, depravity and hypocrisy. Now that the India/Japan opposition had become impossible to sustain, Valignano came up with a new one: Japan/China. He spent almost a year among the Chinese in Macao, and it was not long before the Chinese came to rep-

*Department of Philosophy, Tilburg University, NL 5000 LE Tilburg, The Netherlands.

**Lauriergracht 116, 1016 RR Amsterdam, The Netherlands.

resent all those values which the Japanese had inverted or perverted. Hence the alleged Chinese love of learning, neat dress, delicate eating habits, the shyness of their women, and so on were contrasted with negative images of Japan.

These shifting images were given a new twist by Matteo Ricci, another Jesuit, who lived and worked in China from 1583 until his death in 1610. Both his initial lack of interest or sympathy for the Indians and his disparaging remarks on the Japanese echo Valignano's judgements, but Ricci adds yet another element to the play of contrasts. He had spent his youth in the Italian hill town of Macerata, at a time when family feuds marked the city with prolonged violence. By 1584 he is opposing the Chinese in terms that contrast not only with the warlike Japanese but also with the rough violence of Macerata.

This example, taken from Jonathan Spence's fascinating account of Matteo Ricci and his world (J. Spence, 1985: 40–44), certainly bears out the structuralist adage that relations have primacy: the shifting evaluations of the various nationalities are a function of the structure by which a positively assessed entity seems to call into being, as it were, its negative opposite. A positive Japan 'generates' a negative India; a positive China 'generates' an inverted image of Japan in a negative light, and so on. However, if we look more closely at the divisions which can be traced in these Jesuit images of other peoples, it becomes difficult to trace a dividing line in a neat or clear-cut fashion. Take the contrast between the China of Ricci's middle age and the rough and ready Macerata of his youth: 'Amongst us, it is held to be a fine thing to see an armed man, but to them [the Chinese] it seems evil' (*ibid.*: 44). 'Us' presumably refers to 'we Europeans,' 'we Italians' or 'we Maceratans,' but in expressing his approval of the Chinese attitude and his disapproval of the European/Italian/Maceratan one, Ricci is at the same time distancing himself from 'us'—a precursor of his later attempts to 'go native'?

Besides the interplay between different human nationalities, however — the ethno-anthropological aspect — this seemingly endless construction and reconstruction of the boundaries of Self and Other also passes by way of an animal idiom. Hence in setting the question of the human/animal divide within an ethno-anthropological context, we consider the place of this reference to animality within the broader framework of attempts to arrive at an identification of Self by demarcating it from various Others. In the case of the animal idiom, the boundary traced is determined from the standpoint of the human observer. The varying degrees of humanity, and the boundary between the human and animal, imply a model, a center, from which the other forms can be seen to deviate.[4] As a result, the specificity of the forms themselves is reduced or lost. As Robert Delort remarks:

> The study of mentalities, the imaginary, folklore and mythology by way of the bestiary or the zoomorphism of the major civilisations has accentuated the tendency, which was already evident for historians of domestication and stock-breeding, to consider the single relations of the human and the animal for the great benefit of the history of zoology, but too often at the expense of the history of animals themselves. (R. Delort, 1984: 10)[5]

However, the specificity of the forms themselves is not what is at issue. The case of Jesuit ethno-anthropology serves as an indication that the various nationalities (Indians, Chinese, Japanese...) are constructs, deployed to set self off against other. Though the field of fabulation is not en-

tirely free (there are certain constraints on this work of imagining others), it is not the prior existence of a difference which enables self to distinguish itself from others — on the contrary, it is precisely self's will to distinguish itself from others which creates that very difference.

Ethno-anthropology is comparative in scope. As such, it is framed in terms of difference — if there were no differences between cultures, there would be nothing left to say — but at the same time the work of ethno-anthropology enables comparisons across cultures on the basis of similarity or commensurability — if cultures were not commensurable, there would be no underlying basis of similarity against which the differences could be delineated. In social terms, the other is in relation to self as a member of a different form of human arrangement. In terms of personal identity, the other is in relation to self as a human being. Without the presupposition of commensurability, we would have a difficult task in saying that the other arrangement was an arrangement at all.

Constituted on the basis of commensurability, then, these attempts to mark out self are only able to perform this task by drawing on difference — the difference between self and other. It is an act of production by exclusion: the definition of self depends on a relegation of other to the field of what self is *not*. Peter Stallybrass and Allon White formulate this rule as follows:

> [...] the exclusion necessary to the formation of social identity at level one [official identity] is simultaneously a *production* at the level of the Imaginary. (P. Stallybrass & A. White, 1986: 193)

The mechanism of production by exclusion might in fact be seen as a definition of anthropology itself. As James Boon puts it, 'Perhaps anthropology in any society necessarily produces only what that society's internal conditions require it to conceptualize as *other than* itself' (J. Boon, 1982: 6).

While many of the attempts by anthropologists of 'exotic' cultures to deal with the human/animal divide have been criticised for their timelessness and lack of attention to the historical dimension, anthropologists and historians of Western Europe have paid more heed to the shifts in the position of this dividing line over time (cf. O. Löfgren, 1985). In tracing the development of *la pensée bourgeoise,* many of them have drawn attention to the increasing need to exclude everything animal from the human sphere as the latter came to be defined within the developing bourgeois civilising idiom. An exemplary study in this respect is the work of Norbert Elias (1969),[6] although it should not be forgotten that the mechanisms delineated by Elias are by no means confined to Western Europe, since the ethnographic record abounds in examples of the labelling of one group by another group in an idiom of animality. In many cases, the notion of 'animal-like' has highly negative connotations and a strongly negative moral force. It was thus the term *par excellence* by which the bourgeoisie of Western Europe could express disapproval. 'Animal-like' implied bestial, uncivilised, inhuman, repulsive, evil, as opposed to the positive connotations and moral force of its opposite, 'human.' What was regarded as human (in general) was in fact modelled on the specific, historically contingent lifestyle and ideals of the group in question, the bourgeois middle class.[7]

Orvar Löfgren comments on the bourgeoisie of nineteenth-century Sweden and its attitude toward nature:

> People become increasingly repulsed by the animal behaviour of animals. Their lack of

> shame and propriety only reminds one of all the things one is trying to repress in oneself. One of the main props of the bourgeois idea of self-discipline and civilized behaviour was of course the denial of the animal in Man. Only people belonging to the lower stages of cultural development could live like animals. (O. Löfgren, 1985: 198).[8]

The situation in early modern England was not very different, as Sir Keith Thomas has demonstrated with a wealth of material:

> [...] most people were taught to regard their bodily impulses as 'animal' ones, needing to be subdued. The alternative would be 'beastly' or 'brutish.' Lust, in particular, was synonymous with the animal condition, for the sexual connotations of such terms as 'brute,' 'bestial' and 'beastly' were much stronger than they are today. [...] In early modern England the official concept of the animal was a negative one, helping to define, by contrast, what was supposedly distinctive and admirable about the human species. By embodying the antithesis of all that was valued and esteemed, the idea of the brute was as indispensable a prop to established human values as were the equally unrealistic notions held by contemporaries about witches or Papists. [...] Men attributed to animals the natural impulses they most feared in themselves—ferocity, gluttony, sexuality [...] It was as a comment on *human* nature that the concept of 'animality' was devised. (K. Thomas, 1983: 38, 40–41).

In the case of early modern England, this diversion of the natural impulses men most feared in themselves could be put to political ends. For the élite within the social hierarchy, a negative assessment of bodily functions could be transferred to the conduct of the 'common people,' whose supposed beastliness was expressed in a range of repulsive animal references. This political frame of reference could be extended beyond the domestic body politic to include the 'savages' who inhabited more distant tracts, particularly the Irish. A Victorian bird-lover's description of sparrows as 'the Irishmen of birds, with their noise and their squabbles, their boldness and ubiquity' (cited in K. Thomas, 1983: 63 n.) is only mildly xenophobic by comparison with seventeenth-century references to the Irish as 'more brutish than the Indians' (!), drinkers of human blood, cannibals, and 'a company of impious apes' (see N. Carlin, 1985).[9]

The negative connotations of the term 'animal-like' in the bourgeois idiom can also be seen in Anton Blok's research on professions which were regarded as infamous in the eyes of the settled, urban craftsmen in the German-speaking world from 1200 to 1800. The list of those whom they excluded because they held them to be infamous, lacking in honour and disreputable, included skinners, executioners, gravediggers, prostitutes, refuse collectors, rag-and-bone merchants, criminals, quacks and others (A. Blok, 1981).[10] As Blok points out, all of these *unehrliche Leute* were connected in one way or another with corporeality, the organic side of humanity, what links humans with animals, and what was regarded by the bourgeoisie as 'animal-like,' dirty and unclean. The supposed beastliness of these people was not simply a dirtiness associated with manual occupations, but was supposed to imply a moral beastliness and dirtiness too (A. Bryson, 1990: 151). They were thus also assumed to be prone to violence and lacking in self-control.

It was non-rural voices which associated rural values with 'lower' bodily functions.[11] Bodily functions like defecation, urination and expectoration, uncontrolled and clumsy gestures, primitive 'peasant' dance, inebriation, brawls and unrefined lovemaking were read as signs of a lack of civility. Like a photographic negative, the

effect of such depictions of rural life was to express the superiority of urban civilisation. Hence the Belgian art historian Paul Vandenbroeck (1987) uses the term 'negative self-definition' to refer to the fact that images of the other are forms of self-presentation.

In eighteenth-century France insanity and fever were viewed as signs of a lapse to a wild, untrammeled, animal state, which had symbolized all that was unnatural and evil for centuries (M. Foucault, 1961).[12] Attempts were made to trace affinities between insane types and animal categories. The insane were often locked up in cages like animals, and exhibited to a public which paid for admission (K. Dörner, 1984: 22).

The negative labelling of various groups as displaying animal-like features was not confined to the European continent. The image of non-Western peoples often included the components of a tendency to violence and unchecked sexual urges (R. Kabbani, 1986). There is a very long tradition of the portrayal of Black Africans as bestial (cf. K. George, 1968; R. Corbey, 1989), and while the image of the Amerindian as noble savage is above all an eighteenth-century phenomenon, we find textual and graphic associations linking the native peoples of the Americas — like the Irish — with anthropophagy and unbridled or unnatural sexual drives from the years immediately following the 'discovery' in 1492 (cf. B. Sheehan, 1980; P. Mason, 1987; 1991a).

In the nineteenth century, races were classified on a scale extending from the higher to the lower. The white, 'Caucasian' race was placed at the top of the hierarchy, the natural, intrinsic goal of the history of humanity, marked in all respects (morally, intellectually, technologically) by its superiority. The 'natural' races were on the lowest rung of the ladder of civilization. Anthropologists interpreted them as contemporary ancestors, living fossils, remnants of a primitive era who had not yet abandoned a semi-bestial state. Craniometry was believed to prove the ape-like character of their skulls and their limited intellectual capacity (cf. S. Gould, 1981).[13]

The exclusion of animality from the field of the human sciences belongs within the same chain. Within the metaphysical tradition, as Derrida reminds us (1974: 38a), the Animal itself stands for what is absent or excluded: the lack of Reason, Society, Laughter, Desire, Language, Law, Repression. And, as Tim Ingold recently argued, the narrative that is told in the West about the human exploitation and eventual domestication of animals is part of a more encompassing story about how human beings have risen above the world of nature which includes their own animality (T. Ingold, 1991).

If we apply this logic to the Jesuit view of Africans and Indians, we can see the twin production of self and (an imaginary) other based on the banishment of the other to the realm of near-animality. But near-animality is not the same thing as animality. On the one hand, self marks itself off from other by relegating the latter to a lower status, and thereby elevates its own status. This act of relegation takes the form of a recourse to an animal idiom.[14] On the other hand, to relegate the other entirely to the realm of animality would be to go too far, for in disappearing over the human horizon all commensurability would be lost and the rhetorical force of the animal allegation would be wasted. After all, the force of the human insult 'You pig!' is lost when applied to a pig. The dilemma is an economic one: while the status of ego can be increased by decreasing the human status of the other to the level of near-animality, a full reduction to the animal level is like a

wasteful potlatch — it destroys the credit that one hopes to build up by prematurely foreclosing the comparison.

We are here not concerned with circumscribing the boundaries between humanity and animality. After all, this boundary is a permeable non-boundary, and it is realisation of the *dynamic* nature of the production of self by other and of other by self which can both explain why an animal like the pig can be *both* celebrated *and* reviled (cf. P. Stallybrass & A. White, 1986: 44–59), and deprive structuralist classificatory grids of their interest or explanatory value. Instead of trying to decide whether humans are strictly incommensurable with animals or not, the aim of the present remarks is to examine the different implications which are entailed by two strategies: that which treats humans and animals as if they were commensurable, and that which treats humans and animals as if they were not commensurable.

THE HUMAN/ANIMAL DIVIDE: DIVIDE AND RULE

As we saw, Valignano considered the people of India and Africa to be little better than brute beasts. His reference to Aristotle at this point serves to make it clear what the difference betwen them and brute beasts was, a precise gauge of how little the gap was between humanity and non-humanity. For Aristotle had put forward a theory of varying degrees of humanity, according to which some men are slaves by nature (Politics 1.4.1254a). Although the theory of natural slavery was not at all prominent in antiquity after Aristotle's time (G. de Ste Croix, 1981: 417), it was revived in the sixteenth century when the first contacts were made with the inhabitants of the New World. This led to learned discussion on whether they were to be seen as fully human or whether they were inferior, 'slaves by nature,' who would benefit from being subjected to a (Spanish) master. Protagonists in the debate on the status of the Amerindians used a number of contrasting images to indicate the change in the condition of the Amerindians after receiving the benefits of Spanish law, and one of the contrasts used is that between men and beasts. As Anthony Pagden has commented on this argument:

> The acerbity of this language — the use of images of inversion, commonly reserved for witches and other deviants, and of such descriptive terms as *homunculus*, which suggests not only stunted growth but, since *homunculi* were things created by magic, also unnatural biological origins, the persistent reference to animal symbolism, monkeys, pigs and beasts in general — was intended to create an image of a half-man creature whose world was the very reverse of the 'human' world of those who by their 'magnanimity, temperance, humanity and religion' were the Indians' natural masters. (A. Pagden, 1982: 117–118).

While this language of reversal suggests a scheme in which humanity is opposed to animality, the Aristotelian scheme itself, and particularly the concept of the 'natural slave,' implies a sliding scale of *degrees* of animality or humanity, and thus a degree of mutual permeability between the two terms. On the one hand, the debate on the status of the Amerindians raised the question of certain categories of humans which tend toward animality (bestiality). On the other hand, a phenomenon like that of the criminal prosecution and capital punishment of animals, which was widespread in Europe and elsewhere into the early modern period (E. Cohen 1986 and 1993; P. Mason 1988), suggests the existence of certain categories of animals which tend toward humanity (personification). Both of

these phenomena imply that the relation between human and animal is one of continuity.

The thesis of continuity implies the possibility of an intermediate being, half-human and half-animal.[15] In a theory already contested by the Roman poet Lucretius,[16] such hybrids are supposed to be the result of the promiscuous mating of humans with animals. Some medieval theorists supposed monstrous births to be due to the adoption of 'unnatural' sexual positions during intercourse, intercourse during menstruation, or bestiality (whether in thought or in deed) (J. Céard, 1977: 36; D. Wilson, 1993: 68).[17] Similarly, in his description of the *onocentaurus,* a beast with the head of an ass and the body of a human (or vice versa), the thirteenth-century writer Thomas of Cantimpré wondered whether such a creature was a part of the creation of the world; was it a divine or a diabolical creation?[18] Or was it a secondary product, the fruit of intercourse between humans and beasts?[19] Greco–Roman mythology gives us the *satyroi* and *centauroi,* and the Amerindian view of the Europeans mounted on horseback involved a similar conception of a half-beast, half-man. Ancient Greek traditions on the origins of the Scythians trace them back to a mother who is half-human and half-animal, and as F. Hartog (1980: 44) has suggested, there seems to be a correlation between the hybrid status and a nomadic way of life — another feature shared with some representatives of the animal world.[20]

The Wild Man and Wild Woman of the European popular imagination share a similarly ambiguous status: for some authors they are human, for others they are animal (R. Bernheimer, 1952: 5). Since it is the very essence of this figure to articulate the relation between a specific society and that society's vision of the other, according to J. Le Goff (1985: 166), the contours of the Wild Man are thus as fluid and intangible as those of the other. Given the key function of this figure, it is not surprising that we find Wild Men from Enkidu in the Epic of Gilgamesh and Polyphemos in the Homeric Odyssey onwards. The *silvestres homines* of the Greco–Roman tradition were thought to live in the woods and mountains far removed from the open spaces and plains on which the activities of rational men took place. They had as their companions various woodland gods and demi-gods: fauns, centaurs, satyrs, Silvanus and Silenus. Indeed, the etymological link between forest and savage (*silva* and *silvaticus* in Latin, *Wald* and *Wild* in German) directly connects the lack of civilization to the woodland residence of the Wild Men. This opposition in terms of inner/outer, which is firmly rooted in the Indo-European heritage (E. Benveniste, 1969, I: 311-314), served to articulate the distinction between self and other in terms of the domestic inner world of humanity and the untamed, wild outside world where animals roamed.

The standard characteristics of the Wild Man and Wild Woman were their long hair, the presence of hair covering the body except for the face, feet, hands and the breasts of the female, their nudity — unless they were dressed in animal skins — and the possession of a heavy club or tree as a weapon. The tension between animality and humanity in the figure of the Wild Man is clearly present in the Yvain of Chrétien de Troyes (lines 276–285), where the portrait of the giant herdsman is based on animal comparisons: his head is bigger than that of a horse or any other animal; he has the ears of an elephant, the eyes of an owl, the nose of a cat, the mouth of a wolf, and the teeth of a wild boar. Despite these animal characteristics, though, he is

able to speak and is explicitly human (L. Carasso-Bulow, 1976). Though the standard view on Wild Men and Wild Women seems to have been that they were not men but *similitudines hominis,* half-men, it should be remarked that a standard part of medieval thinking about the human form stressed the head as an index of humanity. Monsters with a human head would have been considered 'one of us' by Peter of Abano, who wrote in 1310: 'You know that it is to be seen especially by the form of the head if an animal ought to belong to our race' (cited in J. Friedman, 1981: 181).

Similar uncertainty about the human or animal status of a creature arises in numerous travellers' tales. A sixteenth-century traveller to Brazil, Jean de Léry, narrates an account that he heard from Tupinamba informants about a fishing expedition. A large sea creature (probably a manatee) tried to overturn an Indian who was out on a bark boat. The Tupinamba cut off the creature's hand with a pruning-hook, which fell on board. The hand had five fingers, resembling a human hand. At this point, the fish raised a human-like head from the water and emitted a cry of pain. De Léry leaves it to the reader to decide whether this fish was a triton or a siren, i.e., a creature that was half-human, half-fish, or whether it was some kind of fish that resembled a man in the way that a monkey does (J. de Léry, 1990: 97-98).

A more problematical category of beings between beasts and men is that of the monstrous human races, a variety of marvellous humans believed to inhabit the remote parts of the earth and distinguished by their physical peculiarity: people with one eye or one leg, people with ears large enough to sleep in, people whose feet face backwards instead of forwards, people with their face on their chest, people without noses or mouths, people with gigantic or miniature stature, and so on. Known as the 'Plinian' races in contemporary discussions, these variations on the human figure, of which a large number were catalogued for the first time in books VI and VII of the *Historia Naturalis* of the Elder Plinius in the first century A.D., had become crystallised into fifty or more types by the end of the Middle Ages.[21] Although discussions refer to these races as the monstrous human races, their humanity was not beyond question. In the *Summa Theologica* produced by Franciscans under the influence of Alexander of Hales in the early thirteenth century, they are begrudgingly granted human status, but it is a decidedly inferior one, as their deformities are seen to be the result of sin. There was a debate between Peter of Auverge and Albertus Magnus on whether pygmies were in fact men or not, and Thomas of Cantimpré set the Plinian races somewhere between animals and men on the grounds that they did not have souls.[22]

Thus far we have a European framework in which degrees of humanity and animality are ranged along a spectrum stretching from animality via half-human, half-animal forms, monstrous human races and 'natural slaves' to full-blooded humanity. A limit case in this respect—as in so many others—is provided by D.A.F. de Sade. Among the notes and extracts on what he read during his imprisonment in Vincennes is a note from 1780 on man's animal ancestry:

> Therefore, as certain bright colours are only degradations of darker ones, properly understood we are only a very fine species of animal. (D.A.F. de Sade 1986: 471).

For the Marquis, then, the gap between humans and animals was non-existent because the former were only an example of the latter. Even this pessimistic vision implies a continuity between humanity and

animality. But what when the supposed continuity between the animal and the human world is called into question?

The question of continuity or discontinuity is at the heart of the dilemma in recent views of the possibility of communication between humans and animals. The possible emergence of a science of the mental state of animals presupposes a two-way communication between animals and human beings (D. Griffin, 1976), but not everyone is convinced about our ability to know what experiences of other animals are like. Indeed, going back to the second century AD, we find the argument of the Sceptics that things appear differently to different animal species, and hence to humankind as well, in the work of Sextus Empiricus.[23] This implies a treatment of animals as on a par with members of the human race. All the same, Sextus never goes so far as to say *how* things appear to animals other than humans. His appeal to animal experiences does not suppose that we humans can know what it is like to be non-human (J. Annas & J. Barnes, 1985: 40-41). More traditionally, Philo of Alexandria, the Jewish philosopher and scholar who also transmitted the views of the Greek Sceptics, changed the argument at this point because he held the orthodox view that humankind has dominion over the other animals (*ibid.*: 46). And as Boria Sax has recently and eloquently argued, the idea of a two-way human–animal communication may well represent the fulfilment of a universal human dream embodied in legends and stories from time immemorial, by which the animals of folklore are amenable to persuasion and have always conversed with men and women (B. Sax 1990: 4).[24] Such a project may well be a step forward from the military metaphors of the conquest, domination or subjection of nature, but its appeal to an alleged commensurability between animals and humans is surely a case of wilful projection.

The same problem of commensurability crops up in a different field — the preserve of social anthropology — in knowing how to deal with statements like those collected from the Venezuelan Piaroa Indians by Joanna Overing. Statements like 'the tapir is our grandfather' are understood by Lévi-Strauss in terms of metaphor. In his view (as expressed in his *Le Totemisme Aujourd'hui* (1962)), it is not the resemblances but the differences which count, and any suggestion of a mystical or blood relation relation between a tapir and a human ancestor is denied. However, as Overing argues (1975: 154), whether we should label such a statement as a metaphorical statement or not 'is a matter of the acceptance or non-acceptance by another of the truth of a 'peculiar' set of statements about the world or a universe of worlds.' In other words, the resort to metaphor in the Lévi-Straussian position functions as a sort of safety net. Overing argues instead for the need to 'view literal statements about the world *as such,* no matter how strange their content' (*ibid.*, emphasis added). As far as the commensurability of animals and humans is concerned, her argument against metaphor is thus an argument against the need to distinguish different semantic fields which the very concept of metaphor entails. At any rate, her approach implies an alignment with the native point of view, for it is a fact that, in speaking of the kinship relations of mythic time, she is not referring to a metaphoric use of kinship terms, because the Piaroa state them to be true, factual and not metaphorical (*ibid.*: 158).

The issue of the continuity or discontinuity between humans and animals also crops up in the work of a philosopher who repeatedly came back to the question of difference: Martin Heidegger. The refer-

ence is not to his *Identität und Differenz,* though, but to a series of lectures delivered in the winter of 1929–30 on the question of 'what is the world?' (M. Heidegger, 1983). Here, in the context of his exploration of human being-in-the-world, Heidegger struggles with new biological theories on animal cognition and behaviour, such as that of Jakob von Uexküll on instincts and *Umwelt,* or Wolfgang Köhler's views of the intelligence of apes.[25] The categorial boundary between the human and the animal that he erects here, as elsewhere in his works, in an original and new—or is it all that new?—way is as strict as most demarcations of the human in traditional European thought. Heidegger distinguishes between the stone, the animal and the human being: the stone is *weltlos,* the animal is *weltarm,* and the human being is *weltbildend.* The term *weltarm* is obscure. On the one hand, it might be taken to imply participation in the same world as humans, but to a lesser degree. This would imply some kind of commensurability between animals and humans. On the other hand, it might point to a radically different kind of relation to the world, which would imply a break with the anthropocentrism that a theory of differences of degree entails. But, in the last resort, the poverty contained in the word *weltarm* necessarily implies a hierarchy of values, and in this case the hierarchy is that of humanist teleology (cf. J. Derrida, 1987: 75–90).

While Heidegger refers to 'animals' as if they formed a homogeneous type of being, a general category under which individual examples can be subsumed, Rousseau, whose *Essay on the origin of languages* begins with the claim 'La parole distingue l'homme entre les animaux' (J.-J. Rousseau 1990: 59), is nevertheless prepared to concede that certain animals, such as beavers, ants and bees, do have a language by which they can communicate with one another.[26] This class of animals can thus be distinguished from other animals. All the same, what distinguishes this class of animals from humanity is their lack of perfectibility (*ibid.*: 65).

In recognizing the existence of diversity in the animal world — of difference between some others and other others — Rousseau still maintains the major distinction between humanity and animality. This is not to say that the problem would be solved by concentrating on animal diversity, on the diverse forms of animal life. Rather, it is to ask whether human sciences like philosophy or anthropology are conceivable at all without the exclusion of animality from the field of discourse as a prior condition to the possibility of that very discourse. If the production of knowledge in these fields takes place through the exclusion of certain categories, and in particular the broad category of animality, it may be worthwhile for the proponents of theories in these disciplines to reflect on the fact that they are representatives of a limited company.

NOTES

1. Most recently, together with John Halverson's 1976 critique, in *Anthrozoös* Vol. II, Number 3:151–174.
2. See the discussion by various authors in *Anthrozoös* Vol. III, Number 4 (1990):214–226.
3. Ethno-anthropology is defined by S. Humphreys (1983: 51) as the 'comparative study of the ways people in different cultures perceive each other.' For other references to the literature and further discussion of the concept of ethno-anthropology see E. Magaña and P. Mason, 1986; P. Mason, forthcoming.
4. Perhaps one of the clearest examples of this is the anthropology of Kant. While declaring a horse to be capable of adherent beauty, Kant claims that it is only man who is both endowed with ideal beauty and is the bearer of an ideal of beauty (see J. Derrida, 1978: 118ff.).
5. Delort's strictures do not apply to the exemplary

work on humans and domestic animals by Jean-Pierre Digaud (1990).

6. The ambiguity of this formulation is deliberate, raising the question of the extent to which Elias is himself an exponent of the bourgeois civilizing values he describes; see R. Corbey, 1991.
7. The terms 'bourgeois' and 'middle class' are used loosely in the present context; this is not the place to go into questions of social stratification, intra-class fractions or hegemony and their relation to the activity of culture-building.
8. As Löfgren points out, this tendency went hand in hand with a new wave of sentimentality toward 'our friends in nature' '97 dogs, cats, canaries and goldfish (cf. *ibid.*:211); and compare J.-P. Digard, 1990:231ff.
9. For an extended discussion of attitudes toward the Irish, see J. Leerssen (1986).
10. On the infamy of skinners and anatomists see also P. Mason (1992).
11. In addition to the classic studies by M. Bakhtin, see particularly P. Stallybrass and A. White (1986), the chapter on 'the medieval grotesque' in A. Gurevich (1988:176–210), the chapter on 'Filthy Rites' in S. Greenblatt (1990:59–79), and the Dutch case studies described by H. Pleij (1979; 1988).
12. For the situation in medieval France see Cl. Blum (1983).
13. For an example of the application of craniometry to *horses* (!) in nineteenth-century France see J.-P. Digard, 1990:53.
14. See the examples in K. Thomas, 1983:47.
15. In the category of medieval *Mischwesen,* J. Le Goff mentions Melusina, sirens, and werewolves (1985:31), reserving the extreme point of the evolultion of these combined creatures to the half-animate, half-inanimate imaginary creations of Hieronymus Bosch. These and other complex creations involving combinations of a plurality of different beings have been discussed in P. Mason (1991b).
16. *De Rerum Natura* V, 890–924.
17. For the theory that monstrous births were due to the acts of the mother's imagination, see M.-H. Huet 1993.
18. The similarity of monkeys to humans troubled late medieval commentators, who felt that they were distortions of humanity.
19. *Liber de natura rerum* 4. LXXXVII. In Book III, Thomas casts doubts on the theory that hybrids were born from intercourse between humans and animals, and inclines to the view that they were born in the remote areas of the Orient.
20. The figure of Enkidu, a hybrid being, in ancient Near Eastern mythology would seem to confirm this correlation: see E. Cassin, 1975.
21. On the Plinian races see R. Wittkower (1942), F. Pfister (1955), Cl. Kappler (19890), J. B. Friedman (1981), E. Magaña (1982a; 1982b); Cl. Lecouteux (1982), P. Mason (1990), D. G. White (1991), J. Romm (1992) and V. Flint (1992).
22. *Liber de Natura Rerum* III.1; cf. J. Friedman, 1981:178–196.
23. For instance, 'Since, then, some animals possess also a natural brilliance in their eyes, and emit from them a fine and mobile stream of light, so that they can even see by night, we seem bound to suppose that they are differently affected from us to external objects' (*Outlines of Pyrrohonism* I. 45, tr. R. G. Bury). For further discussion of Sextus Empiricus see P. Mason, forthcoming.
24. The ethnographic record abounds in what we would regard as a confusion of human, animal and inanimate categories, particularly in relation to shamanism, but discussion of this topic would exceed the bounds of the present article.
25. For further discussion see R. Corbey, 1988:88–94.
26. For Thomas Sebeok (1991), the distinguishing feature of humans from other life forms is the presence of verbal messages, which have so far only been found in the subspecies *Homo sapiens sapiens*. While the ability to model reality in nonverbal signs can be found among animals too, it is the syntactic component in language which is unique to hominids. Language thus turns out to be the property of a very limited company indeed.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Annas, J., and J. Barnes. 1985. *The Modes of Scepticism.* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge etc.

Benveniste, E.. 1969. *Le vocabulaire des institutions indo-européennes,* 2 vols. Editions de Minuit, Paris.

Bernheimer, R. 1952. *Wild Men in the Middle Ages.* Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA.

Blok, A. 1981. Infame beroepen. *Symposion III:104–128.*

Blum, Cl. 1983. La folie et la mort dans l'imaginaire collectif du Moyen Age et du débat de la Renaissance (XII–XVI siècles). In *Death in the Middle Ages,* H. Braet and W. Verbecke (eds), Mediaevalia Lovaniensia, s.I, Studia IX, Leuven University Press, Leuven: 258–285.

Boon, J.A. 1982. *Other Tribes, Other Scribes.* Cambridge University Press, London.
Bryson, A. 1990. Gesture, Demeanour and the Image of the Gentleman in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth Century England. In *Renaissance Bodies. The Human Figure in English Culture c. 1540–1660,* L. Gent and N. Llewellyn (eds.). Reaktion Books, London: 136–53.
Carasso-Bulow, L. 1976. *The Merveilleux in Chrétien de Troyes' Romances.* Droz, Geneva.
Carlin, N. 1985. Ireland and natural man in 1649. In *Europe and its others,* F. Barker et al. University of Essex Press, Colchester, Vol. II:91–111.
Cassin, E. 1975. Le semblable et le différent: Babylone et Israël. In: *Hommes et Bêtes,* ed. L. Poliakoff. Mouton, Paris:115–127.
Céard, J. 1977. *La nature et les prodiges. L'insolite au XVI*[e] siècle, en France. Droz, Geneva.
Cohen, E. 1986. Law, folklore and animal lore. *Past and Present 110:8–37.*
————. 1993. *The Crossroads of Justice. Law and Culture in Late Medieval France.* Brill, Leiden.
Corbey, R. 1988. De Mens een Dier? Scheler, Plessner en de crisis van het traditionale mensbeeld, Ph.D. diss., University of Nijmegen.
————. 1989. *Wildheid en beschaving. De Europese verbeelding van Afrika.* Ambo, Baarn.
————, 1991. Freud's phylogenetic narrative. In *Alterity, Identity, Image. Selves and Others in Society and Scholarship.* Amsterdam Studies in Cultural Identity I, R. Corbey and J. Leerssen (eds). Rodopi, Amsterdam and Atlanta:37–56.
Delort, R. 1984. *Les animaux ont une histoire.* du Seuil, Paris.
Derrida, J. 1974. *Glas.* Galilée, Paris.
————. 1978. *La Vérité en Peinture.* Flammarion, Paris.
————. 1987. *De l'esprit.* Galilée, Paris.
Digard, J.-P. 1990. *L'homme et les animaux domestiques. Anthropologie d'une passion.* Fayard, Paris.
Dörner, K. 1984. *Bürger und Irre. Zur Sozialgeschichte und Wissenschaftssoziologie der Psychiatrie. Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main.*
Elias, N. 1969. *Über den Prozess der Zivilisation. Soziogenetische und psychogenetische Untersuchungen.* 2 vols., 2nd ed., Bern/Munich.
Flint, V. I. J. 1992. *The Imaginative Landscape of Christopher Columbus.* Princeton University Press, NJ.
Foucault, M. 1961. *Folie et déraison. Histoire de la folie à l'age classique.* Gallimard, Paris.
Friedman, J. B. 1981. *The Monstrous Races in Medieval Art and Thought.* Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA and London.
Gould, S. 1981. *The Mismeasure of Man.* Harmondsworth, Middlesex.
Griffin, D. R. 1976. *The Question of Animal Awareness: Evolutionary Continuity of Mental Experience.* Rockefeller University, New York.
George, K. 1968. The civilised west looks at primitive Africa. In: *The Concept of the Primitive,* ed. A. Montague. New York:175–193.
Greenblatt, S. J. 1990. *Learning to Curse. Essays in Early Modern Culture.* Routledge, London and New York.
Gurevich, A. 1988. *Medieval popular culture. Problems of belief and perception.* trans. J. M. Bak and P. A. Hollingsworth. Cambridge Studies in Oral and Literate Culture 14, Cambridge Unbiversity Press and Editions de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, Cambridge and Paris.
Hartog, F. 1980. *Le miroir d'Hérodote. Essai sur la représentation de l'autre.* Gallimard, Paris.
Heidegger, M. 1983. *Die Grundbegriffe der Metaphysik. Welt — Endlichkeit — Einsamkeit.* Gesamtausgabe Bd. 29/30, Frankfurt.
Huet, M.-H. 1993. *Monstrous Imagination.* Harvard University Press, Cambridge and London.
Humphreys, S. C. 1983. *The Family, Women and Death. Comparative Studies.* Routledge and Kegan Paul, London.
Ingold, T. 1991. From Trust to Domination. An Alternative History of Human–Animal Relations, paper presented to the Conference 'Animals and Society: Changing Perspectives,' Royal Society of Edinburgh, 3–4 October 1991.
Kabbani, R. 1986. *Europe's Myths of Orient. Devise and Rule.* Macmillan, London.
Kappler. Cl. 1980. *Monstres, démons et merveilles à la fin du Moyen Age.* Payot, Paris.
Leach, E. 1964. Anthropological aspects of language: Animal categories and terms of abuse. In *New directions in the study of language,* ed. E. Lenneberg, MIT Press, Boston:22–63.
Le Goff, J. 1985. *L'imaginaire médiévale.* Gallimard, Paris.
Lecouteux, Cl. 1982. *Les Monstres dans la littérature allemande du Moyen Age.* Kümmerle Verlag, Göppingen, 3 vols.
Leerssen, J. 1986. *Mere Irish & Fíor-Ghael. Studies in the Idea of Irish Nationality, its Development and Literary Expression prior to the Nineteenth Century.* Adams, Amsterdam and Philadelphia.
Léry, J. de 1990. *History of a Voyage to the Land of Brazil, otherwise called America.* trans. and intro. by J. Whatley, University of California Press, Berkeley, Los Angeles and Oxford.
Lévi-Strauss, Cl. 1962. *Le Totemisme Aujourd'hui.* Plon, Paris [=Totemism, tr. Rodney Needham,

with an introduction by Roger C. Poole, Penguin Books, Middlesex, 1969].

Löfgren, O. 1985. Our Friends in Nature: Class and Animal Symbolism. *Ethnos* 50:184–213.

Magaña, E. 1982a. Note on Ethnoanthropological Notions of the Guiana Indians. *Anthropologica* XXIV:215–233.

————. 1982b. Hombres Salvajes y Razas Monstruosas de los Indios Kaliña de Surinam. *Journal of Latin American Lore* 8(1):63–114.

Magaña, E., and P. Mason. 1986. Tales of Otherness, Myths, Stars and Plinian Men in South America. In *Myth and the Imaginary in the New World*. E. Magaña and P. Mason (eds), CEDLA Latin America Studies 34, CEDLA/FORIS, Amsterdam/Dordrecht:7–40.

Mason, P. 1987. Seduction from Afar: Europe's Inner Indians. *Anthropos* 82:581–601.

————. 1988. The excommunication of caterpillars. *Social Science Information* 27(2):265–273.

————. 1990. *Deconstructing America. Representations of the Other*. Routledge, London and NY.

————. 1991a. Continental incontinence. *Horror vacui* and the colonial supplement. In *Alterity, Identity, Image. Selves and Others in Society and Scholarship*. Amsterdam Studies in Cultural Identity I, R. Corbey and J. Leerssen (eds), Rodopi, Amsterdam and Atlanta:151–190.

————. 1991b. Half a Cow. *Semiotica* 85(1/2):1–39.

————. 1992. La lección anatómica. *Foro Hispánico* 4:131–155.

————. Ethnography, ethnology and para-anthropology: Sextus Empiricus and Hellenistic comparative method. *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt* II, Band 37, 4 (forthcoming).

Overing, J. 1985. Today I shall call him "Mummy": Multiple worlds and classificatory confusion. In *Reason and Morality*, J. Overing (ed.). ASA Monographs 24, Tavistock, London and New York:152–179.

Pagden, A. 1982. *The fall of natural man. The American Indian and the origins of comparative ethnology*. Cambridge Iberian and Latin American Studies, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Pfister, F. 1955. Von den Wundern des Morgenlandes. *Deutsches Jahrbuch für Volkskunde* 1:127–146.

Pleij, H. 1979. *Het gilde van de Blauwe Schuit*. Meulenhoff, Amsterdam.

————. 1988. *De sneeuwpoppen van 1511*. Meulenhoff/Kritak, Amsterdam/Leuven.

Romm, J. S. 1992. *The Edges of the Earth in Ancient Thought*. Princeton University Press, NJ.

Rousseau, J.-J. 1990. *Essai sur l'origine des langues*. Texte établi et presenté par Jean Starobinski, Gallimard, Paris.

Sade, D. A. F. de. 1986. *Oeuvres I*. Pauvert, Paris.

Sax, B. 1990. *The Frog King. On Legends, Fables, Fairy Tales and Anecdotes of Animals*. Pace University Press, NY.

Sebeok, T. A. 1991. *A Sign is Just a Sign. Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis*.

Sheehan, B. W. 1980. *Savagism and Civility. Indians and Englishmen in Colonial Virginia*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Spence, J. D. 1985. *The Memory Palace of Matteo Ricci*. Faber and Faber, London.

Stallybrass, P., and A. White. 1986. *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression*. Cornell University Press, Ithaca, NY.

Ste Croix, G. E. M. de. 1981. *The Class Struggle in the Ancient Greek World from the Archaic Age to the Arab Conquests*. Duckworth, London.

Thomas, K. 1983. *Man and the Natural World. Changing Attitudes in England 1500–1800*. Allen Lane, London.

Vandenbroeck, P. 1987. *Beeld van de Andere, Vertoog over het Zelf*. Royal Museum for Fine Arts, Antwerp.

White, D. G. 1991. *Myths of the Dog-Man*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London.

Wilson, D. 1993. *Signs and Portents. Monstrous Births from the Middle Ages to the Enlightenment*. Routledge, London and New York.

Wittkower, R. 1942. Marvels of the East. A Study in the History of Monsters. *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 5:159–197.